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AUTHOR Gainous, Fred; Moses, Robert; Romine, Robert J.
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ABSTRACT

This white paper highlights provisions of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), signed into law by President Clinton in 1998, and presents the resulting opportunities for The Alabama College System to broaden its role as a partner in redefining and advancing the state's workforce development system for the 21st century. The foreword points out the importance of preparing employees for the demands of the "knowledge-based" economy, the role that Alabama's community colleges have played in workforce training, and Alabama's current low level of literacy and jobs per capita. The WIA provisions are as follows: (1) a state workforce investment board and a local workforce investment board should be established to assist the governor in developing policies and procedures; (2) local service delivery areas should be established, taking into account the geographic service areas of local educational institutions, available resources, and the extent to which these areas are consistent with labor market areas; and (3) one-stop delivery systems should be established in each local area to provide activities such as welfare-to-work, veterans programs, and Title II adult education and literacy activities. Alabama has already made a substantial investment in workforce development through its system of two-year colleges, and the wisest use of workforce investment funds is the leveraging of this existing workforce infrastructure into a stronger, more efficient, permanent workforce training system. (CAK)

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THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM

A PARTNER IN ECONOMIC AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

A

WHITE PAPER

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Prepared by
Fred Gainous, Chancellor
The Alabama College System

March 30, 1999

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THE ALABAMA COLLEGE SYSTEM
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FOREWORD

Alabama stands at a critical juncture in its history. The workplace of the coming years demands employees who are highly skilled and highly trained in order to meet the needs of business and industry as they compete in the global economy. According to the report of the Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education to the Alabama State Board of Education, "Alabama's workforce is not prepared to compete in the global economy...."[1] Alabama's citize find themselves competing for increasingly high-tech jobs. Alabamians face a workplace which has become increasingly automated and technical. Students who were successful high school graduates as recently as seven to ten years ago are unlikely to have adequate computer and technical skills to remain successful in today's competitive job market.[2] Those who have been unsuccessful in high school face an even more critical task in securing the sophisticated levels of training necessary to maintain high-wage, high-skill occupations required in today's economy.

Eighty percent of new jobs available over the next decade will require a minimum of two-years of postsecondary education.[3] Eighty-five percent of all jobs will require skilled workers or professionals.[4] Eighty-five to ninety percent of the people working today will still be in the labor force in the next decade, requiring continuous high level training to maintain an adequate workforce.[5] Often, those individuals most in need of opportunities for employment training, workforce training and education for career advancement are those who are most unfamiliar with the means available for securing such training.

In Alabama, two-year colleges have attempted through physical proximity, through outreach and through new modes of electronic delivery to meet the needs of the state for workforce training with comprehensive assessment, evaluation, job market analysis, pre-vocational training, skills training, pre-employment training, specialized and customized training. Alabama's two-year colleges have specialized in providing a vast array of programs and services to adult students seeking jobs and

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[1] *Report of the Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education*, Alabama State Board of Education, January 14, 1999.

[2] *National Profiles of Community Colleges: Trends and Statistics*, American Association of Community Colleges, 1997-98.

[3] *Business First*, "Developing a Competitive Workforce," 1991; American Association of Community Colleges, Commission on Workforce Development, 1996; American Technical Education Association, 1998.

[4] Ibid.

[5] American Association of Community Colleges, Commission on Community and Workforce Development, 1996.

training leading to improved employment opportunities. Two-year colleges in this effort have long served special populations including educationally and economically disadvantaged adults, individuals with disabilities, dislocated workers, single parents, and displaced homemakers.

The new economy which we are experiencing in Alabama today is a knowledge-based economy. Increased levels of education and increasingly sophisticated levels of training have become the key to earning a living. It takes education beyond high school to gain the skills and competencies necessary to earn a middle income wage in our new economy. Employers continue to demand more highly educated and skilled workers. For those with only a high school diploma, median earnings have declined since 1976.[6] The new jobs which will be available to Alabamians in the future will be different from the "drive it, dig it, lift it, or pick it" jobs characteristic of the traditional Alabama economy. Automobile assembly, steel making and fabrication, health care, pharmaceutical production, electronics, computer component production and various other businesses have blossomed in Alabama, resulting in a rapid growth in the number of jobs which are classified as high-skill occupations.

The National Association of Manufacturers' Center for Workforce Success has found in a recent study that there is "a continuing, worsening skills gap in the manufacturing workforce" of our nation.[7] This directly impacts Alabama. This skills gap limits the ability of manufacturers to innovate, change, and compete. This, in turn, negatively impacts the economy, jobs and income. Eighty-eight percent of manufacturers report difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill jobs. Sixty percent of manufacturers report that they typically must reject between 50 and 100 percent of job applicants as unqualified. Sixty-two percent of manufacturers report that job applicants have inadequate technical skills. One-third of manufacturers report that job applicants have inadequate reading and writing skills. The skills gap is found not only in new, entry level job applicants, but also in incumbent workers, those already on the job. Up to two-thirds of manufacturers report that incumbent workers have serious deficiencies in math skills and oral and written communication skills. Forty-eight percent of manufacturers indicate that incumbent employees lack the ability to read technical documents and blueprints. Almost two-thirds of manufacturers report that current employees are deficient in basic employability skills such as timeliness, readiness and productivity.

In the global economy the primary advantage of any nation or state is its supply of highly educated and highly skilled workers. The skills gap identified by the National Association of Manufacturers' Center for Workforce Success indicates that the continued well being of the economy of our nation and of our state hinges on the development of advanced manufacturing methods and technologies, and the application of those methods and technologies by a well-trained, highly-skilled workforce which we do not have. The recently completed National Workforce Development study has concluded that never in our history have employers been confronted with such a critical need to maintain the high skill levels of their employees in order to compete. Nearly eighty percent of employers surveyed in this study estimated that 25 percent or more of their workforce requires

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[6] *The State of the South, 1998*, Dr. George Autry, MDC, Inc.

[7] *The Skills Gap*, Center for Workforce Success, National Association of Manufacturers, 1998.

immediate training. More than 20 percent of employers estimate that 76 to 100 percent of their workforce require immediate training.

Not only does the lack of a sufficiently skilled workforce hinder manufacturing and production, but the absence of a highly skilled workforce threatens statewide and regional economic development. A highly skilled workforce is a primary ingredient in attracting new industries to the state, and in keeping existing industries in the state. This has been echoed in the recent efforts of Alabama's two-year colleges to provide workforce development and training to assist Mercedes and Boeing in their new economic ventures. But it has also been echoed in continuing efforts by Alabama's two-year colleges to meet the workforce training needs of companies already located in the state, such as Michelin, Bush Hog, Briggs and Stratton, Dorsey Trailers, General Electric, Goodyear, Motorola Acustar, Atlantic Marine, Ciba Geigy, Intergraph Corporation, Martin Marietta, Rheem Manufacturing, Sony, Teledyne, Uniroyal Goodrich, MacMillan Bloedel, Steelcase, Bell South, Fluid Power Systems, Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, U. S. Steel, Omni International, Weyerhauser, Elf Atochem, Scott Paper, Dunlop Tire, Pridecraft Enterprises, AT&T, Gulf States Steel, United Defense, Filtration Manufacturing, Reynolds Metals, Thermo King, Caterpillar, American Building Company, HealthSouth, Union Camp and hundreds of other companies. Through its extensive network across the state, Alabama's two-year colleges help to train as many as 50,000 Alabama citizens who are already employed by approximately 2,000 Alabama businesses and industries each year.[8]

The workforce development system of the state must take into account the graying of Alabama's workforce. By 2020 the largest 10-year cohort of workers in Alabama will be between the ages of 55 and 65. Thus, Alabama faces the prospect of moving into the next century with fewer younger, better educated workers entering the workforce, and with increasingly greater dependence upon older workers who did not acquire and who still do not have the education and training they will need to compete in the modern workplace. These prospects have resulted in the ranking of Alabama as 46 out of 50 states in terms of its educated labor supply.[9]

As a consequence of broad social and economic conditions as well as the absence of a coherent, articulated workforce training effort, Alabama has lagged behind her sister states in jobs per capita.[10] In Alabama, one in six adults is functionally illiterate.[11] One in every three adults does not have a high school education or a GED certificate.[12] Alabama's high school dropout rate of 18 percent

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[8]*Educating Alabama's Workforce*, Chancellor's Annual Report, Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education, 1995; *Promoting Economic Growth Through Workforce Development*, Council for Alabama Resource Development, 1996.

[9]*Financial World*, November 1996.

[10]Report of the Task Force for Effectiveness Planning in Postsecondary Education, Alabama State Board of Education, January 14, 1999.

[11]Thomas J. Methvin, "Alabama's Poverty Industry," *The Alabama Lawyer*, July 1997.

[12]Ibid.

exceeds the national dropout rate dramatically.[13] The high dropout and illiteracy rates in Alabama have had a negative effect on the workplace, contributing not only to increased poverty for citizens of Alabama, but serving also to inhibit the recruitment of new businesses and industries and the maintenance of existing businesses and industries in the state. Clearly the only logical solution to this situation is to partner with business, industry and labor to address directly their employment needs, and to develop a customer-driven system to produce a workforce adequate to Alabama's needs. Alabama must create a vehicle for transforming the current fragmented group of training and employment programs into a coordinated information and service delivery system for individuals seeking first jobs, new jobs or better jobs, and for employers seeking more highly trained workers. The key elements of such a vehicle must be universal access through one-stop centers, customer choice, integration of services and performance-driven outcomes. Alabama's two-year colleges have been striving to accomplish the creation of such a network throughout its thirty institutions located strategically across the state. This effort has been in concert with the actions of state and national leaders.

"Government leaders at the state and national levels have devoted time and energy throughout the past several years to evaluating the effectiveness of [the] American workforce's ability to deal with challenges of emerging technologies, a redefined workplace, and international competition.... in a context of reducing government spending, eliminating duplication of services, and redistributing both power and money to the states and [local] communities".[14]

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE

Workforce Investment Act: President Clinton signed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) into law (Public Law 105-220) on August 7, 1998. The bill consolidates and streamlines the federal role in adult and youth job training and adult and vocational education. WIA replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) by July 1, 2000. In 1999, the State of Alabama will develop a five-year transition plan to implement the provisions of WIA and will submit the plan to the U. S. Secretary of Labor. This paper highlights provisions of WIA and opportunities for The Alabama College System to broaden its role as a partner in redefining and advancing the state's workforce development system as Alabama moves into the 21st Century.

Expected Outcomes: WIA legislation provides a mechanism for states to:

- Reduce duplication and expenditures to operate workforce development programs and services
- Strengthen local economic development initiatives
- Encourage business/industry and education to jointly improve workforce development for youth and adults
- Transition welfare recipients to gainful employment
- Provide more accessible information about job preparation and training through one-stop centers

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[13]Alabama State Department of Education, Executive Summary Information for School Year 1997-98.

[14]American Association of Community Colleges, Commission on Workforce Development, 1996.

- Provide a greater degree of accountability and performance-based assessment
- Provide fiscal incentives to increase the academic and vocational skill levels of current and future employees
- Provide a highly skilled workforce to support national, state and local economic development initiatives

Among the first states to address the future role of their community, junior and technical college systems in support of economic growth and workforce development are Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

WIA Governance Guidelines: The Workforce Investment Act **provides for** the establishment of a **state workforce investment board** and **local workforce investment boards** to assist the Governor of Alabama to develop policies and procedures and to organize, administer, and monitor the workforce development system. A majority of state and local board representatives must be representatives of business with at least one chief executive officer from community colleges.[15]

- Other **state workforce investment board members** will include two members of each legislative chamber, appointed by the presiding member of each House. The Governor will appoint additional members of the board. These members will include chief local elected officials, education providers, representatives from the state agency for one-stop partnerships, labor organizations, economic development groups, youth activities, community-based organizations, and relevant state agencies providing employment-related services.

- **Members of local workforce investment boards** are to be selected by the chief local elected official and certified by the Governor according to criteria established by the state workforce investment board. The composition of the local workforce investment boards (with the required majority business sector) will include representatives from local education providers (adult and literacy education and colleges), labor organizations, community based organizations, veterans groups, individuals with disabilities, economic development and one-stop partners.

- **Youth Councils**: The WIA provides for the chief local elected official in each designated region to appoint members to serve on local **Youth Councils** (YC) that will function as subgroups of the local WIA boards. YC membership will include WIA board members, representatives of public housing, parents of eligible youth, former participants in youth programs, youth service agencies, individuals with youth activity experience, Job Corps personnel, and others as agreed to by the YC board chair and local elected officials. Alabama College System providers of youth programs and services may be designated to sit on local YC boards. Year-round program elements include:

    - Tutoring and study skills
    - Alternate secondary school services

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[15] [P.L. 105-220, SEC. 111. State Workforce Investment Boards, (b) Membership, (1) (C) (v) and SEC. 117. Local Workforce Investment Boards, (b) Membership, (2) (A) (ii).]

- Summer employment opportunities
- Paid/unpaid work activities
- Occupational skills training
- Leadership development
- Supportive services
- Adult mentoring
- Follow-up services
- Comprehensive counseling

Alabama two-year colleges currently collaborate with public schools to operate year-round programs in order to motivate youth to remain in school, graduate, enter postsecondary education, and prepare for careers. These initiatives complement and extend the federal resources to be provided under WIA. They include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support Services, 21st Century Learning Centers, Gear Up, Tech Prep, School-to-Work and dual enrollment.

Local service delivery areas (SDA): SDAs must be established throughout Alabama. In the design of local service delivery areas, the Governor must consider the geographic service areas of local education agencies and postsecondary education institutions, the extent to which such local areas are consistent with labor market areas, the distance that individuals must travel to receive services, and resources available in the local areas to administer cost-effective job training activities.

- The Alabama College System is built around eight regional State Board of Education districts, each with a population of 200,000 or more. This structure provides a viable option for the Governor and the Legislature to designate "temporary and subsequent" local SDAs in the state plan, utilizing existing State Board of Education Districts.[16]

- The alignment of Alabama's eight State Board of Education districts with the state's eight "temporary and subsequent"[17] SDAs will add the economic development advantage of thirty postsecondary institutions, three skills training institutes, numerous campuses, and other external education and training sites. This action will capitalize on the state's investment in facilities, equipment, electronic network infrastructure, and technical training expertise to improve the readiness of Alabama's workforce to meet the challenges of emerging technologies and skill standards that are vital to Alabama's competitive posture in the national and international market place.

- This action will foster greater communication, collaboration, and cooperation, among business and industry and workforce training providers, and will leverage resources among and between state and local, public and private agencies to improve workforce development programs for youth and adults.

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[16][SEC 116. Local Workforce Investment Areas, (a) (3) (A)]

[17] Temporary designations are for two years and may be extended an additional three years subject to local performance and fiscal integrity.

- Increasing the number of SDA regions in Alabama to eight, based on State Board of Education districts, supports the participation of The Alabama College System in the expansion of the state's WIA one-stop career center network, the front door for future workforce development.

One-Stop Centers

The Workforce Investment Act requires that a **one-stop delivery system** be established in each local area. Local boards will have the authority to designate one-stop center operators. Required one-stop partners and authorized programs/activities include:

- WIA mandated Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs
- Programs under the Wagner-Peyser Act
- Title II Adult Education and Literacy activities
- Programs under the Title I Rehabilitation Act
- Welfare-to-Work
- Training activities under the Older Americans Act
- Postsecondary Vocational Education programs
- Activities under the Trade Act of 1974
- Veterans programs
- Activities under the Community Service Block Grant Act
- Activities under the HUD Employment Training
- Unemployment Compensation
- Older Workers

Other public and private agency providers are optional and at the discretion of the local boards.

College Providers: The WIA states that postsecondary institutions designated by the U. S. Secretary of Education to participate in programs authorized under Title IV of the 1992 Higher Education Amendments and other federal programs are automatically considered as one-stop center **service providers**. According to the criteria stated in the five-year plan, the Governor and the state *Workforce Investment Act* board will designate other providers.

Adult Education: The WIA repeals the *Adult Education Act*, which has been in effect for 32 years. Adult education is no longer part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, and is now incorporated as Title II of the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, entitled the *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act*. Among other things, the new emphasis of this act is to assist adults to become literate in order to secure skills leading to employment. The new approach to adult education mandated by the statute links it directly to workforce development. As active providers of Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Education Development (GED) and similar programs, Alabama's two-year colleges are essential partners in one-stop centers. The Alabama College System has also specialized in the provision of training in English as a Second Language (ESL). The growing diversity of the labor force in Alabama will make ESL training a key component of workforce training. The provisions of the WIA allow for the continuance of existing agreements to provide adult basic education instruction.

JTPA Skills Centers: For more than a decade, Alabama's Private Industry Councils (PIC) and Skills Centers have administered the provisions of the Jobs Training Partnership Act. JTPA personnel have developed expertise in providing and coordinating workforce development activities, often with colleges and public schools, for economically disadvantaged youth, adults, and dislocated workers. PICs have experienced particular success in overseeing the operation of summer youth, on-the-job training, work experience and job development/placement programs.

While the scope of the state's economic development system will broaden under the WIA to include services to the "universe," or all members of Alabama's workforce, in addition to a host of new activities, the future role of JTPA personnel in the local SDAs and at one-stop career centers must be addressed.

Core Services: One-stop career center core services include outreach, intake, and eligibility determination; initial assessments of skill levels, job search and placement assistance; career counseling; identification of job vacancy listings; assessment of skills necessary for jobs in demand; and the provision of education and training.

Individual Training Accounts (ITAs): WIA authorizes the award of ITAs or vouchers at one-stop career centers for qualified participants. Vouchers may be used for on-the-job training, customized training, and classroom and laboratory instruction. State workforce investment boards have the responsibility to determine the voucher distribution policy. The values of these vouchers will be determined by each local workforce investment board.

Eligibility: **Eligibility is no longer dependent solely on income and employment status. This is a significant difference between JTPA and WIA** in determining the eligibility of one-stop center customers to receive education and training. It is based on customer employment choice, job skill requirements, and need for connecting services in order to prepare for initial entry into the workforce or re-entry into the workforce. Testing and assessment, a function routinely provided on all Alabama two-year college campuses, is key to determining eligibility. Prior to the issuance of ITAs or training vouchers, Pell eligibility of many participants must also be determined by financial aid counselors, a function routinely performed by Alabama's two-year colleges.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): The operation of each one-stop career center will be outlined in an MOU. The local workforce investment board, with agreement of the chief elected official for the area, must develop and enter into a memorandum of understanding for the operation of each one-stop center. Contents of the MOU shall contain provisions describing:

- One-stop service providers or partners
- The services to be provided through the one-stop center
- How the cost of such services and the operating costs of the one-stop will be funded
- Methods for referral of individuals between the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners for the appropriate services and activities
- Duration of the MOU and amending the memorandum during the agreement
- Other provisions consistent with the WIA

Compliance with the provisions in the MOU will be determined during the auditing process.

Rapid Response: Resources provided under WIA may be used by the state to provide **Rapid Response** (to address mass job dislocation) and **customized training** (to meet special training requirements for employers needing to expand their workforce).

Accountability: WIA places considerable emphasis on performance accountability and optimum return on investment of Federal taxpayer dollars. The bill specifies core performance indicators for all aspects of workforce development initiated at the state and local service delivery levels. Performance measures must be addressed in Alabama's state plan and approved by the U. S. Secretary of Labor. The state, in turn, is required to negotiate performance levels with each SDA, taking into consideration economic and demographic factors. Federal incentive funds and sanctions are contingent upon states meeting negotiated levels of performance.

Title I of the WIA lists separate core indicators for youth programs and for adult employment and training programs. These indicators do not apply to participants who only receive self-service or information activities. The core indicators of performance for adult employment and training activities and dislocated worker programs are:

- Entry into unsubsidized employment;
- Retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into employment;
- Earnings received in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into employment; and
- Attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, which may include attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or occupational skills by participants who enter unsubsidized employment, or by participants who are eligible youth age 19 through 21 who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment.

The core indicators of performance for youth programs (serving students aged 14-18) are:

- Attainment of basic skills, and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills;
- Attainment of secondary school diplomas and their recognized equivalents; and
- Placement and retention in postsecondary education or advanced training, or placement and retention in military service, employment, or qualified apprenticeships.

The customer satisfaction indicators of performance consist of the customer satisfaction of employers and participants with services received from workforce investment activities. Customer satisfaction may be measured through surveys conducted after the conclusion of participation in the workforce investment activities.

Alabama's Unified Plan: Alabama may submit a **"Unified Plan"** to the Secretary of Labor to ensure the coordination of, and avoid duplication among, workforce development activities for adults

and youth, adult education, and secondary and postsecondary vocational education. Secondary education may be included in the unified plan only if agreed upon by the Alabama Legislature. The Act specifies programs eligible to be included in the plan, including those funded by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act and the Adult Education Act.

A VISION FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

It is important to note that the title of the new legislation is the *Workforce Investment Act*. The funds it provides must be wisely invested to create a permanent workforce training system for the state. Alabama has already made a substantial investment in workforce development through its system of two-year colleges. This investment includes facilities, equipment, staff, and technology which have become a permanent part of the workforce training infrastructure of the state. The wisest use of workforce investment funds is the leveraging of this existing workforce training infrastructure into a stronger, more efficient, permanent workforce training system which will continue to function to meet the needs of the state long after the current federal statute is gone.

Some states in the past have created and supported with federal funds intended for workforce training, vast bureaucratic organizations which have been perpetuated through forty years of federally funded workforce development entitlement programs. Those states are now at a disadvantage in facing the future under the *Workforce Investment Act*. States which are already implementing the *Workforce Investment Act* are those which invested those funds in permanent workforce training infrastructure, such as two-year colleges, allowing for the creation of a coordinated, customer-driven, accessible, non-fragmented information and delivery system for individuals and employers seeking workforce training, characterized by integration of services and performance-driven outcomes.

Alabama can benefit from their activities. Alabama can use WIA funds to leverage this most recent piece of federal legislation into a permanent change in the workforce development process, capitalizing on and strengthening the investment it has already made through its system of two-year colleges. More money should be invested in workforce training, and less in bureaucratic overhead.

The Alabama College System has a complete array of advising, assessment and training delivery systems which can be used to improve the workforce of Alabama. Approximately 150 career/technical training programs result in the delivery of a variety of employment skills and competencies. These training programs vary in length from a few weeks to two years and lead directly to employment. For those participants in need of basic skills, The Alabama College System has a close working relationship with the Adult Basic Education Program operated by the Alabama Department of Education. This program prepares adults who are not high school graduates for the General Education Diploma. This program, which is offered on the two-year college campuses, provides adults with skills equivalent to those of high school graduates. For those requiring additional assistance, routine assessment to identify special learning needs for all first-time students identifies exactly what kinds of skills need to be improved. The colleges offer a full range of tutoring and remedial/developmental classes and services to remedy skills deficiencies in order to prepare program participants to receive full benefit of their career/technical training program. In

addition, special orientation and transition services and programs are provided to ensure success of program participants.

The Alabama College System is a logical provider for the key components of workforce development for a number of reasons:

- Alabama's two-year colleges have a long history of providing vocational, technical, and career training in fields that reflect the needs of their local economics–often providing some of the most sophisticated training available anywhere in new and emerging technologies.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have a close working relationship with local constituents, including local business and industry, many of whose representatives sit on the college's numerous program advisory boards.

- Alabama's two-year colleges already provide a variety of training programs and services to small and medium-sized businesses where the unmet need for worker training is the greatest.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have considerable successful experience in providing programs and services for adult students, who make up the bulk of the existing workforce that requires additional training and retraining.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have long served special populations including the educationally and economically disadvantaged, individuals with disabilities, dislocated workers, single parents and displaced homemakers, and criminal offenders.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have invested in alternative delivery mechanisms, including infrastructure for providing distance education and instructional technology to support independent learning, which are well-positioned to serve adult learners.

- Alabama's two-year colleges have also invested heavily in support services for adults, especially in assessment, counseling, educational planning and academic advising, tutoring and remedial education, career development, and job placement services that are vital to support nontraditional adult education.

- The Alabama College System offers child care facilities at many locations to accommodate adults who have children and who are seeking workforce training.

- There is an Alabama two-year college located within commuting distance of approximately 90 percent of the total population of the state.

- The Alabama College System can provide pre-vocational skills training and post-training follow-up to prepare program participants to complete training successfully and to facilitate the transition from training to the workplace.

Alabama's 30 two-year colleges are strategically positioned to take a leadership role in workforce development for the new millennium. All 30 institutions can provide:

- Quick response to changes in local and regional labor market supply/demand characteristics, resulting in new programs for business and industry.

- One-stop centers that cooperate and collaborate to provide outreach, intake, assessment, career counseling, education and training referral, financial assistance, job placement, and other transition-to-work referral assistance.

- Special populations served include: educationally and economically disadvantaged youth and adults, veterans, Native Americans, migrant and seasonal farm workers, welfare-to-work transition clients, individuals with disabilities, dislocated workers, underemployed workers, women and minorities, single parents, single pregnant women, non-English speaking persons, illiterate persons, the homeless and criminal offenders.

- Historical collaborative ventures designed to foster economic and human resource development undertaken with county/city commissions, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, private industry councils, and business/industry, and local school systems.

- Targeted job training for students seeking high-wage employment and employers seeking high-skilled employees, with a planning focus on Alabama's occupational forecast.

- On-the-job-training including: apprenticeship, internships, cooperative education, work-based learning, paid experiences.

- Integrated methodologies in academic and technical education programs, producing high skilled graduates.

- Articulated learning experiences between high schools and other colleges and universities, including Tech Prep, School-to-work Programs, dual enrollment, and Project Gear-Up.

- Accountability for results, as demonstrated by competency skill standards, licensure, successful job placement and other performance indicators.

- Industry-specific customized training, including "just in time" training, as needed, for current and future employees.

Over the past year, representatives from community colleges have communicated, cooperated, and collaborated to conceptualize the organization and implementation of one-stop career intake, assessment, education and training referral, and job placement centers. More recently, the Chancellor of the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education has projected One-Stop Centers to be the state's initial customer-service contact system, offering every Alabamian access, through service sites, telephone or computer network, to the following services:

- Job search, referral and placement assistance;
- Career counseling and education planning;
- Assessment and evaluation;
- Consumer reports on trainers and job placement providers;
- Recruitment and eligibility determination for assistance;
- Support services including child care and transportation;
- Adult education and basic skills training;
- Employability skills training;
- Technical training leading to a certification and degree; and
- Information concerning temporary income, health, nutritional and housing assistance.

In some localities, plans call for housing one-stop centers on community college campuses; in other locations the intent is to select locations considered more central to the targeted populations to be served. Planning has proceeded based on the premise that the location and staffing of centers will be a local decision. Plans are underway to pilot at least one local one-stop center in each of the eight State Board of Education districts.

The Alabama College System has a long and distinguished record of providing quality programs and highly qualified graduates for business and industry. In Alabama's dynamic economy, where technological changes and market shifts are forcing layoffs as new jobs are created, The Alabama College System is the state's major provider for equipping workers with needed skills and linking them to job vacancies. Alabama's colleges are committed to strengthening jobs and education partnerships at the state level and in each local service delivery area. The state's thirty postsecondary institutions and skills training institutes stand ready to help plan and implement a **21st Century Workforce Development System** that is market-driven, placement-based, community-managed, customer-focused, one-stop centered, cost-effective and outcome-accountable.

Points of Consideration

- Total Alabama Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) expenditures for program year 1996 amounted to $46.6 million.

- Total JTPA funds expended on assessment and workforce training through the Skills Centers amounts to $23.9 million.

- The cost of maintaining the JTPA bureaucracy and overhead are considerable.

- The title of the new legislation, the *Workforce Investment Act*, is important to note. Alabama has already made a substantial investment in workforce development through its system of two-year colleges. The wisest use of workforce investment funds is the leveraging of this existing workforce training infrastructure into a stronger, more efficient, permanent workforce training system which will continue to function to meet the needs of the state long after the current federal statute is gone, rather than the perpetuation of a bureaucracy which has developed over forty years of federally funded workforce development entitlement programs.

- Without some regional level assistance in implementation of the *Workforce Investment Act*, there is real potential for chaos.

- If every local community has a local workforce investment board, there will literally be hundreds of them with overlapping service areas.

- Each local workforce investment board, according to the Act, establishes the value of the individual training account (voucher) in its local area. It is conceivable that the value will vary considerably, especially if there are hundreds of local workforce investment boards. The value of the individual training account (voucher) brought by each client to the same training entity could well be different, creating an accounting challenge of some dimension.

- It seems logical that the regional level assistance in implementation of the *Workforce Investment Act* begin with organizing around the eight existing State Board of Education districts, equal in population.

- State Board of Education members can easily serve to help organize and coordinate the implementation of the *Workforce Investment Act* structure in their districts, in order to minimize the difficulties inherent in the process. They need not be designated "chief local elected official" in order to assist in organizing and coordinating implementation.

- The Governor loses no appointment, decision-making or political power under such an arrangement. In fact, the Workforce Investment Act itself makes that impossible. The Governor gains a ready-made organizational structure, to help ensure smooth implementation, over which he presides as the President of the State Board of Education.

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